

The Spirit of Christmas



Columbine.

ON the left, just past the weather hen's nest, and not more than two steps from the box where they keep the cuckoo, there is the long bed where roses bloom all the year round. And they grow like this so that Columbine may always have one to stick in her hair, and that odd, mocking, soft-hearted cynic Pierrot may cull one now and again to twiddle between his teeth.

If you know the way, and the Cheshire cat will let you, you walk down the garden path, past the butterfly lime, and arrive at the nearest little cottage in Olympus.

Now this is the dwelling place of the Harlequin set—Harlequin, Columbine, Clown and Pantaloon. It is one cottage in a little colony on the lower slopes of Mount Olympus (where the high gods dwell: Jupiter and the like), and is most important because it contains the oldest inhabitants.

The Clerk of the Weather lives a little higher up. The Four Queens and Kings live in a square of pagoda-like houses, and are waited upon by the Knaves. Pierrot and Pierrette live in romantic seclusion by a pool in a tumble-down place covered with blue roses. And away behind the fields of stars where the flocks of clouds graze, there is another village where the Seven Princesses live, and the Third Son and an Ogre, and a Talking Rabbit, and all those peculiar and beautiful people who are entangled in our minds with the memories of night nurseries, and the scent of our mothers who bent over us in wonderful toilettes, and told us to go to sleep, or they'd be late for dinner.

When it gets to be about Christmas there is a sort of aroma of excitement on the lower slopes of Olympus, and, especially in the house where Harlequin lives—a delicious sense of something exciting happening.

Columbine opens the lid of the well that looks down onto the world, and there comes up a murmur of children's voices, and you can hear the quaintest things being said about the hanging up of stockings, and about Santa Claus and the likely width of chimneys, and the running power of reindeer. And there is a tremendous rustle of colored paper, and a great run on almonds and raisins, and quite respectable citizens stand in front of shop windows gazing at dolls and dolls gaze back at them, so that the citizens go back forty years at a rush, and the rush is so great sometimes that they get tears in their eyes; for memory is quicker than motor cars, and the road it travels is often dark and broken.

So Columbine leaves the top of the well open all day and all night, and all the people in her cottage sleep with their windows open, so that the sweetly laden air comes up and gives them wonderful dreams. It does more than that. It waves the branches of the Christmas tree that grows at the bottom of the garden, near the sausage frames, and very soon candles begin to bud on its branches.

Now when the candles begin to get ripe, which happens at the same time that geese and turkeys hang in rows in shops and grow rosettes all over them, Harlequin takes an old, oaken pipe from a cupboard under the stairs, and they all sit round while he puts it to his lips and blows.

As he plays, dreams come to them of their ancient days, for Harlequin is first cousin to Mercury, and wears a black mask to hide the light of his face when he visits Columbine, who is Psyche, the Soul; the Clown is Momus, the Spirit of Laughter; and Pantaloon is Charon, who has that grim work of ferrying the souls over the Styx.

There's an odd link of memories and of things held all through the centuries, but the most charming is this: Columbine is a flower-like person, and there is a flower called Columbine, and it is so called because it is like four doves with outspread wings, and the French dove is colombe, and the dove is the symbol of the soul. So the world is never allowed to forget beautiful things, even if the burden of history is borne on the back of a flower. And the god-like glow and glitter of Mercury's limbs still shows in the glistening sequins on Harlequin's clothes, parti-colored as they have always been, to show how he covered his nakedness with rags.

All this, beautified by the essence of Time, like things put away in a cedar chest, comes back when Harlequin blows on his pipe that air the shepherds learnt in Greece from Pan.

The next night Clown will take out another kind of pipe, a long churchwarden of white clay, and fill it with tobacco, and then as the fragrant clouds roll up into the rafters, memories come of all the great people of the Harlequinades they play down in the world, all inspired by them, and they see the figure of Tarlatan, who was the first clown, and invented the very clothes they now wear, hand in hand with Grimaldi, that great clown. And they seem to see all the great Italian Harlequins, and the dainty French Columbines, and the old dandies of fifteenth-century Venice whose clothes Pantaloon wears.

Do you know that elderly gentlemen in the World, smell that magic tobacco, or something like it, and they forget their paunches, or their bald heads, and they sit and dream of the time they went to their first pantomime? Was it "Cinderella," or "Beauty and the Beast"? Or was it that splendid thing "Mother Goose," or that entrancing production "The Yellow Dwarf"? Such things are conjured up by just that one pipe of tobacco smoked in the cottage on Olympus, and on that night a gentle breeze blows up through the well, laden with the poignant, eternal memories of childhood, and the candles on the Christmas tree are



Pantaloon.

all ready to be lighted. They are so ready that when Pantaloon looks out of his window before making up his face for the day he sees that the candles have burst into flame-flowers in the night.

Then Columbine takes out a pipe, and she puts some magic soap into nectar and stirs it round with the bowl of the pipe until frothy ends appear. And then she blows bubbles that float up and out of the window until they reach the Christmas tree, when they turn into great, glittering glass balls, all sorts of colors, and show pictures of the world all colored and shining.

The children in the World look up and think they see Harlequin and Columbine floating down as gently as feathers, but they don't say so because their elders would only tell them it was the clouds. But it is Harlequin and Columbine, and Pantaloon and Clown follow soon after, bringing the tree with them.

Now their own job and hers. Clown the laughter spring up in and ripple as barley field Harlequin to for common appear beau- and a penny wealth of the Indies. And Pantaloon to stirring up old memories in dull people, so that uncles must remember all their nephews in remembering when they were nephews themselves, and had a peculiar hunger at Christmas.

Columbine is awfully practical. Her sentiment extends from the joy of watching the making of baby-clothes to the pleasure of remembering to put nice soap in the spare rooms. It is she who sees that children get the right presents, and when they don't it is not her fault, but the fault of some stupid person in a shop.

It is she who suggests the secret delight of keeping presents hidden at the bottom of the wardrobe; and it is she who suggests the secret delight of peering at children when they are asleep.



Pierrette.

of the good old times! Holly and mistletoe and robins, and church bells sounding over the snow. And hampers all packed to be sent away, and plenty to eat at home.

And then Columbine steals up to the windows, and taps them with the rose from her hair, and she whispers:

"Open, open to me all you who have no children and no friends and no hope, and I will be the warm, nestling thing you covet for your frozen hearts, and you shall feel my soft cheek against yours till the tears come and your heart takes life again. You shall give joy to other people's children. And if you have no friends who have children, are there not a thousand, thousand children who have no friends? Go to them, and give them all you can, and you will be rewarded almost more than you can bear, for there is a link between those who suffer. Are there not some you have forgotten or neglected? This lonely man, that lonely woman whom you have left uncared for, perhaps for years. Put on your hat and your coat, and put your heart on your sleeve, so that all may know your errand."

To see her pleading before black, sombre houses where a thin light shines under a blind; to see her face pressed against the window of some big mansion where a man or a woman sits alone with hearts like stone; to see her tears as she essays to melt an aching heart is to see something so touching and beautiful that one almost wonders the doors and windows are not instantly opened to admit the spirit of love she begs for so pitifully.

"Look at yourselves, Messieurs et Mesdames Importance, and remember the funny little things you used to be when you bit at coral and bells, and wore bibs, and thought everybody in the world had enough to eat; when you hated to go to bed early, and crept downstairs in your nightgowns to listen over the banisters to the voices in the dining room; when no jam for tea was a tragedy. And when your mother's knee was the throne of justice and mercy, for you buried your head there with her hand in your hair, and forgot to be afraid of the dark."

Columbine has her own very particular work, and she calls it in her mind Secret Delights. She calls it that because she delights in making up odd names for emotions, as, for instance, when she pointed out two lovers to me one day in the spring, who were seated under a hedge, yellow-flushed with primroses; they were holding hands and looking at the hills beyond just as if some wonderful thing was about to come over the hills to tell them what their feelings meant. And the peace was so great and the moment so held that the World seemed to have stopped breathing, and something superhuman to have poured out a cup of stillness. And she called it Liquid Velvet. A Liquid Velvet moment. And I understood.

It is Columbine who watches that beautiful comedy of the newly married, who steal about their house hand-in-hand, fearful of waking the very new servants, fearful of creaking the boards as they gaze enraptured on the very new furniture, looking with joy on the very new pots and pans in the kitchen, turning the electric lights up and down all over the place to see the effect in their new bedroom. And he has a dreadful brooch for her hidden where he keeps his razors; and she has knitted him a tie he will have to wear. But it is all perfectly beautiful.

Someone wrote the other day that people who read are more interested, nowadays, in business than in love, and I'm so sorry for that man. He is more blind than I thought anybody could be. Business may be the means to an end, but Love is the beginning and the end. And it is just at this season that Love makes business; hence the shops full of gifts. Imagine a poet writing:

"Cent. per cent. the moon is rising.
Watch the stocks upon the bank;
Rubber shares are too surprising;
Speculators are surmising
Who the deuce they have to thank!"

No one can get a heartbeat out of that, and whatever your business man says, he knows he gets all the good in his life out of heartbeats.

So this Christmas Spirit creeps about the world, mocked at, scorned, but alive yet. And you who feel these things may one night see this quaint quartet at work, perhaps for a second at the corner of your street, perhaps just vanishing down the drive, or moving swiftly down a country lane. And you may say wonderingly: "It is a cobweb, a moth, and the branch of a tree, and the starlight makes them look like—like something I remember."

But I tell you who they are—Harlequin, Columbine, Clown and Pantaloon. And if you hear a child's laugh ring out suddenly, and it brings a new, quick emotion, one of them has conquered you!

The spirit of Christmas doesn't cling to presents in proportion to their cost—unless you are very rich; and if you are very rich the voice of the jeweler and of the furrier and of the motor car maker will seem to you as wise as the word of a happy poor man, though he were a philosopher.

Simple and genuine and glad—strike these notes and the chiming will be very melodiously for you and for those whom you try to make happy. And remember, you can't feign Christmas without being caught as an impostor, both by your own conscience and by the feelings of those about you. The very value of Christmas is that it puts the genuineness of everybody to an unerring test.



Harlequin.

OLD DUTCH HOUSE

Dwelling in Staten Island Was Built About 1634.

Bought in 1848 for \$3,000 by Father of Present Owner, Who Has Lived in It Ever Since—Never Married; Never Loved a Woman.

New York.—The oldest mansion and colonial house on Staten Island is at Willow Brook, a secluded and picturesque place, a mile from Port Richmond. It is supposed to have been built shortly after the arrival of the first Dutch settlers on Staten Island in 1634.

The old mansion has ten rooms. The walls of field stone, gathered nearby, are two feet thick, keeping out the cold in winter and the heat in summer. The flooring in the bedrooms is two feet wide and two inches thick, and, like the rafters in the roof, were hewn with an ax. The other parts of the building that decayed were replaced with modern lumber.

An old Dutch oven, wherein a week's baking for the family was done at one time, is in the same state of neatness and order as when the good Dutch hausfrau left it, in readiness for her next baking day.

There are beautiful rosewood tables, chairs and other pieces of antique and colonial furniture in the mansion that would fill the heart of an antiquarian with joy.

The present owner and occupant, Samuel W. Standing, now seventy-two, has lived in it since he was seven years old. In 1848 the 20 acres of land and the mansion were purchased by his father, Samuel W. Standing, for \$3,000. Part of the mansion is rented to a young couple.

"I was born in Lewisham, Yorkshire, England, and came to Staten Island with my parents when seven years of age," said Mr. Standing. "I had two sisters. One died young, and the other is married to my neighbor, Joseph Sykes. I am a steel comb maker by trade, and began work when I was twelve years old in my father's mill, which is now run by me."

"I come from a family of steel comb makers. My father, my grandfather and my great-grandfather were steel comb makers."

"In 1889, my father, then seventy-seven, began to fail in health, and wishing to be buried with his kin in Lewisham churchyard, he tried to get my mother to return to England with him. She refused and he started alone."



Oldest Home on Staten Island.

but died on shipboard in sight of land. His body was carried ashore, however, and buried in Lewisham churchyard.

"I have never married; I never loved a woman. There were times when I felt lonely, and thought I might marry if I could meet a good, gentle, kindly, home-loving woman. I never met one, and it is too late now. I have this consolation, though; I never made the mistake of marrying a woman without love and then breaking her heart because I was disappointed."

CAVE-INS ADD ZEST TO GOLF

Extra Hazards Break Into Games of Unique Links at Scranton, Pa.

Scranton, Pa.—While playing golf on the links of the Scranton Country club Rev. J. H. Odell and Valentine Bliss discovered that the course passed the unique character, that in addition to the regular hazards, new ones are appearing daily. Doctor Odell was preparing for a long drive and approached his ball with a well delivered stroke. The ball ascended and after a long trajectory descended into a mine cave thirty feet in depth. It was a hazard that could not be approached and the game ended.

A bell mine cave in the Cathedral cemetery, one hundred feet from the Hoban Memorial chapel, wrecked five graves. Four rough boxes were up-titled and one casket broken in half, exposing the corpse. The cave was thirty feet in diameter and about the same depth.

HEIRS SETTLE BACK TAXES

Bavarian Government Collects on Property Which Was Under-valued by Owner.

Munich.—The Bavarian government has discovered one way of recovering taxes where a man has under appraised his property and income, and that is, after his death, to collect from the heirs. The heirs of the late Herr von Clomm, formerly president of the diet, or parliament, have had to pay over \$115,000 back taxes upon the estate.

A HIDDEN DANGER

It is a duty of the kidneys to rid the blood of uric acid, an irritating poison that is constantly forming inside.



When the kidneys fail, uric acid causes rheumatic attacks, headache, dizziness, gravel, urinary troubles, weak eyes, dropsy or heart disease.

Doan's Kidney Pills help the kidneys fight off uric acid—bringing new strength to weak kidneys and relief from backache and urinary ills.

A MICHIGAN CASE.
Mrs. G. W. Burger, 408 Sherman Ave., Corns, Mich., says: "The pains through the small of my back were so severe that sometimes I could not get out of a chair. If I stooped, I would nearly topple over. I had awful dizzy spells and my house-work was a burden. Doan's Kidney Pills helped me from the first and continued use entirely cured me."

Get Doan's at Any Drug Store, Etc. or a Box

DOAN'S KIDNEY PILLS

FOSTER-MILBURN CO., Buffalo, New York

FOR COUGHS AND COLDS

Most of the so called theatrical stars are rockets.

NOT FIT FOR LADIES

Public sentiment should be against it, and we believe it is, there can be no reason why ladies should have to suffer with headaches and neuritis, especially when Hunt's Lightning Oil gives such prompt relief. It is simply a question of getting the ladies to try it. All druggists sell Hunt's Lightning Oil in 2c and 5c bottles. Ad.

Transmigrating Turkey.

"The only time I ever believed in the transmigrating of souls was one frosty November afternoon on my Indiana farm."

The speaker was George Ade, the humorist. He continued:

"It was a day or two before Thanksgiving. The trees were bare. The fields were a russet brown color. Toward me over those russet fields strutted a very plump, very large, very young turkey."

"Then it was that an ardent belief in the doctrine of metempsychosis seized me."

"You," I said to the superb bird, "you are now a turkey. And you will die tomorrow. But, cheer up. Your next transmigrating will be into the body of a humorist not unknown to fame."

There Were Others.

"You," I sighed the rejected lover, "would find your name written in imperishable characters on my heart could you but look."

"So," murmured the fair young thing who was aware of the fact that the swain had been playing Romeo at the seaside for something like 20 years. "So? Then you must have a heart like a local directory by this time."—Tit-Bits.

Father's Admiration.

Mrs. Shortley was discussing the latest fashions with a young lady caller.

"Did you say your husband was fond of those clinging gowns, Mae?"

"Yes, he likes one to cling to me for about three years."—Lippincott's Magazine.

Very Much So.

"When Mrs. Jibbets was asked why she neglected her friends so, she gave a bald excuse."

"What was it?"

"The baby."

Gloomy Outlook.

"It's going to be a hard winter."

"How can you tell?"

"By the size of the salary I'm getting."

NEVER TIRES

Of the Food That Restored Her to Health.

"Something was making me ill and I didn't know the cause," writes a Colo. young lady: "For two years I was thin and sickly, suffering from indigestion and inflammatory rheumatism."

"I had tried different kinds of diet, and many of the remedies recommended, but got no better."

"Finally, Mother suggested that I try Grape-Nuts, and I began at once, eating it with a little cream or milk. A change for the better began at once."

"To-day I am well and am gaining weight and strength all the time. I've gained 10 lbs. in the last five weeks and do not suffer any more from indigestion, and the rheumatism is all gone."

"I know it is to Grape-Nuts, alone that I owe my restored health. I still eat the food twice a day and never tire of it." Name given by Postum Co., Battle Creek, Mich.

The favour of Grape-Nuts is peculiar to itself. It is neutral, not too sweet and has an agreeable, healthful quality that never grows tiresome.

One of the sources of rheumatism is from overloading the system with acid material, the result of imperfect digestion and assimilation.

As soon as improper food is abandoned and Grape-Nuts is taken regularly, digestion is made strong, the organs do their work of building up good red blood cells and of carrying away the excess of disease-making material from the system.

The result is a certain and steady return to normal health and mental activity. "There's a Reason." Read the little book, "The Road to Wellville," in 10 pgs.

Ever read the above letter? A new one appears from time to time. They are genuine, true, and full of human interest. Adv.